

184 this homogeneity by reducing the traditional authority of
563 the chiefs who more than anyone else are responsible for the
[631] preservation of ethnic differences, in being the repositories
of tribal customs.

563 For Senegal as a whole, this homogeneity does not go
[369] beyond similarities in socio-political structure, a common
adherence to Islam, uniformity in styles of dress, a tradition
of common relationship and a growing use of Wolof as
a lingua franca. Only in the larger towns has there been
any general break-down of traditional tribal barriers and
only in the town does one find a high incidence of inter-
ethnic habitation and, more important still, inter-ethnic
marriage. And since it was mainly in the towns that the
French applied their policy of assimilation it is reasonable to
assume that there is probably some correlation between the
two. In the first place the French in Senegal have always
tended to think of the local inhabitants as Senegalese rather
than Wolof or Serer, which runs contrary to the common
European attitude to ethnic divisions, particularly in British
territories where the tendency was always to emphasise
the tribal origin of an African rather than the colony in
which he lived. Indeed the British administrators, as Lord
Lugard himself observed, were always great partisans of
particular ethnic groups. Such an attitude, however,
has not always been absent in Senegal. For instance Mercier
has remarked that certain European foremen in factories
tended to choose workers of the same ethnic group in order
to avoid possible friction, but he adds that this was not always
justified.

563 In the *Quatre Communes*, which for a long time were Senegal
619 as far as the French were concerned, the inhabitants came
[369] to accept from early on the idea of being Senegalese as well
as Wolof and Serers. Or they might have thought of them-
selves parochially as St. Louisiens or Dakarois. With their
elected deputy, their *Conseil-Général*, and their municipal
councils, the Senegalese crossed early on the barrier between
tribalism and nationalism, a result for which other African

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leaders had to work so ardently and patiently many decades later. Where it has often seemed to be the policy of European powers to divide and rule, here the French positively encouraged the creation of a Senegalese identity. Faidherbe created the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, whereas Lugard called his force the Hausa Constabulary. For many years, Senegal has had a romantic and sentimental place in the eyes of the French, and the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, who in fact enjoyed the services of recruits from all over West Africa, are known by most Frenchmen for their services to France in both world wars. This concept of national as distinct from tribal identity in the *Quatre Communes* also influenced the educated élite from the Protectorate who were determined to participate in the privileges of the *originaires*.

A policy of assimilation that has the aim of eradicating the African past and the creation of 'black Frenchmen', when applied thoroughly, did in fact help to eliminate tribal differences and create a new common culture. In particular, education, which grouped children of different ethnic groups side by side, made no concession to local circumstances. They were taught about 'our ancestors the Gauls' and in the best schools standards were the same as those in France. Instruction was in French from the very first years, and the school uniform was in European style. They were thus given a common meeting ground from the earliest age, with almost no concessions made to their own ethnic differences. Large numbers of Senegalese have been to France for their education ever since the days of Faidherbe, and in France they found themselves automatically dubbed as Senegalese, for few Frenchmen had time for the niceties of tribal distinctions.

It is not surprising, then, that particularly among young men many friendships were made outside the tribe. Indeed today in Dakar it would be rare to find a young man with primary education who could not count many friends from outside his own ethnic group. Marriage presented different problems. For if the young man had overcome sensitivities

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[582] about tribe, the women, who in a Muslim society rarely gained the opportunity of education, tended naturally to be more conservative in such matters. Nevertheless many *originaires* have married outside their ethnic group and can claim to be Senegalese and Senegalese only, for how else, they ask, can they describe themselves when one grandparent is Wolof, another Toucouleur and yet another Serer? This is by no means common in Senegal, but its highest incidence is amongst the most assimilated groups in Senegal.

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[619] One of the most difficult barriers to break down in African tribal society is that of the taboo on marriage outside the tribe or clan. Onuora Nzekwu in his *Wand of Noble Wood* gives a very illuminating study of this problem. In Senegal however, there is an exceptionally high rate of inter-ethnic marriage for Africa. Mercier, in his study of Dakar, observed that the rate of inter-ethnic marriage was below the

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[582] Senegalese average amongst the Diola, Serer, and Wolof where endogamy is clearest, whilst the Bambaras and groups of the south, and particularly the Lebou who are inter-marrying increasingly with the Wolof, were above the average. Out of 696 monogamous families investigated, 71 per cent had married a woman of the same tribe, but the figure of 29 per cent for mixed marriages must be

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[595] considered extremely high for Africa. Out of 228 polygamous families interviewed 43 per cent were all of the same ethnic group but 57 per cent had at least one wife of different ethnic origin. The highest incidence of inter-ethnic marriages in Dakar occurs amongst clerks, administrators, employees of commercial houses and the professional classes, i.e. those who have been most affected by French assimilation and for whom ethnic considerations are considerably less important than for the peasant, who is so much closer to the traditional concepts of the tribe. There is then in

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[619] Dakar, and one could apply this to other main towns, a significant increase in inter-ethnic marriages, though as far as Senegal as a whole is concerned ethnic considerations in marriage are still very important. But the multiplication

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of inter-ethnic marriages in the towns is indicative of a major social change and a reflection of the effects of an assimilationist policy on the Senegalese.

Though many communities in Dakar are based on ethnic and family ties, particularly amongst the immigrant Toucouleurs from the Vallée du Fleuve, Dakar is on the whole a heterogeneous city. Mercier has observed that inter-ethnic habitation is particularly frequent among young bachelors, who often club together to hire a room. This is still relatively rare in Africa except amongst educated élites. But in Senegal many young men resent being asked the question whether they are Wolof or Serer, answering only to the name Senegalese. As far as friendship outside the ethnic group and in particular living with someone from another tribe is concerned, one great advantage is the existence of a common cuisine for Wolof, Serer, Toucouleur and Lebou. There is even a national dish known as *riz sénégalais*, known further down the coast as Jollof rice. This means that not only can friends share the same plate, but a man is not frustrated in his desire to marry outside his ethnic group by fear of a foreign cuisine.

Another important factor in the breakdown of tribal barriers has been the urbanisation of Senegal. Over 25 per cent of the population live in towns, the bulk in Dakar, Rufisque and St. Louis and Kaolack. This represents a higher rate of urbanisation than in any other West African territory except the Western Region of Nigeria, where, it must be pointed out, urbanisation was intense long before the arrival of the Europeans and therefore does not owe its origin to colonisation as it does in Senegal. It is difficult in the present stage of research to measure the results of the inter-mixing of races in urban agglomerations. But in an environment whose *raison d'être* is completely different from that of the tribal village, the individual is subjected to so many pressures that his ethnic individuality has to be extremely strong for him not to assimilate both ideas and customs from his neighbours and above all from the

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369 immense impact of the town. They¹ live in small villages
563 made up of relations and fellow villagers. They even club
together, subscribing to a common fund to receive their
fellows from the Fleuve, and as far as work is concerned they
[463] virtually monopolise certain jobs such as bootboys, waiters,
and newspaper sellers. This maintenance of tribal cohesion
is a difficult task in this city of French creation, where a new
community of Dakarois is rapidly coming into existence.

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665 An important factor in the breakdown of tribal ties
563 has been the creation of political parties and the creation
• [619] of a new political élite that thinks in national terms.
[182] Experience in Africa has shown, however, that this can work
two ways, for many political parties are in effect organisations
intended to defend ethnic interests. Senegalese
politics have on the whole been remarkably free from
tribalism, though Senghor did in fact achieve much of
his success in the early days of the *B.D.S.* though the
emphasis he laid on ethnic considerations in the organisations
of his party, and certainly there have existed specifically
regional and ethnic parties like *Le Mouvement Démocratique*
Casamançais and the *Union Générale de la Vallée du Fleuve*.
But, as Kenneth Robinson pointed out in his study of
Senegalese politics in *Five Elections in Africa*, these ethnic
and regional aspects were compensated for by the federal
aspect of the major party, *Le Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais*.
In 1954, in fact, all ethnic and regional sub-sections
of the *B.D.S.* were abolished and individual membership
was insisted on. But though this led to the breaking-away
of certain elements in the Casamance, it would be fair to
say that the party has been much less dominated by those
regional differences that normally influence political parties
in West Africa. Nevertheless, as Robinson found in the 1957

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[666] election, there were a number of constituencies where
ethnic rivalries were more important than political issues.

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[666] At Linguère, a single member constituency, the population
[665] was divided between Fula and Wolof in the proportion
of three to two. When the sitting member, a Fula, was

7 [i.e., The Moors and Toucouleurs in Dakar--Analyst]

563 them strict enough Muslims, the main distinguishing
[433] feature of their homeland, the Vallée du Fleuve du Sénégal,
[735] is its poverty compared with that of other parts of Senegal.
Diop Abdoulaye in his study of Toucouleur immigration
into Dakar estimates that the average *per capita* income of a
Toucouleur of that region is little more than 4,000 C.F.A.
[434] per annum, i.e. about £6 a year. It is this rather than any
real tribal differences that makes the Vallée a special
problem, and this as much as any ethnic factor accounted
[665] for the existence of the *Union Générale de la Vallée du Fleuve*.

563 The only real minority area in the Senegal is the Casa-
• 619 mance, whose special position is further emphasised by its
separation from the main block of Senegal by the Gambia.
In the past it has been thought of as geographically,
economically, socially and even religiously separate from
the rest of Senegal. A forest zone closer to its neighbours
Portuguese Guinea and the Republic of Guinea, it re-
mained very underdeveloped by the French, though
the present Government is taking this fact into account
with a special development programme for the area.
This separateness was emphasised by the very name Casa-
mance. The people describe themselves to this day as
Casamançais rather than Senegalese, though this could well
be accepted on the same terms as a Briton describing
himself as Scots or Welsh. It is fortunate that the tendency
is to talk in terms of regional rather than tribal origin.
However one of the important factors in the Casamance
has been tribal. The Diolas were until very recently an
animist people with an entirely different social organis-
ation from that of the main groups of Senegal, though as
we have already pointed out they had traditional ties with
the Serer which went as far as the injunction that a Diola
should never spill the blood of a Serer. But today the Diola
are being drawn into the main socio-religious pattern of
Senegal. In the most recent estimate of the religious
adherence of the population of Casamance, estimated at
[162] 327,500, 284,000 were Muslims, only 28,000 Christians and
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the rest animists. Of course this includes the exclusively Muslim Mandingo inhabitants of the Casamance who have been largely responsible for this proselytisation. The Diola too is inclined more and more to imitate his Mandingo and Wolof neighbours. L. V. Thomas, who has written a monumental study on the Diola, fears: 'Soon the Diola country may be, at least in its landscape, like Senegal if no power intervenes to limit the extension of the bushfire; it will certainly become, in its people, just another African country, where only a few anthropological remains fixed by heredity will enable us to distinguish the Diola from the Wolof or the Mandingo.'

The Casamance may well be coming closer to the rest of the Senegal, but it still remains a seat of opposition to the Government of Senghor and Dia, and votes heavily for the opposition *P.R.A.-Sénégal*. However neither of the leaders of this party, Ly Abdoulaye or Assane Seck, is *Casamançais*, and there is strong support in many towns for the *U.P.S.*, which indicates that Diola-Casamance politics are not necessarily either regional or tribal, though these are important factors.

The main social problem of the Senegal, and one which both assimilation and religion seem to have been unable to break down, is that of caste or a class structure very similar to caste. All the main Senegalese tribes—the Wolof, Lebou, Toucouleur, Serer—are divided into a series of endogamous castes. These castes differ slightly from tribe to tribe, but roughly they are divided thus:

Nobles and Freeborn

Artisans (jewellers, smiths, weavers, leatherworkers)

Griots or minstrels

Liberated slaves

Slaves

(Of course domestic slaves no longer exist as such in Senegal, but families know who their slaves were.)

It is certainly easier in Senegal for a Toucouleur noble to marry a Wolof noble than to marry a woman of inferior

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